

Library

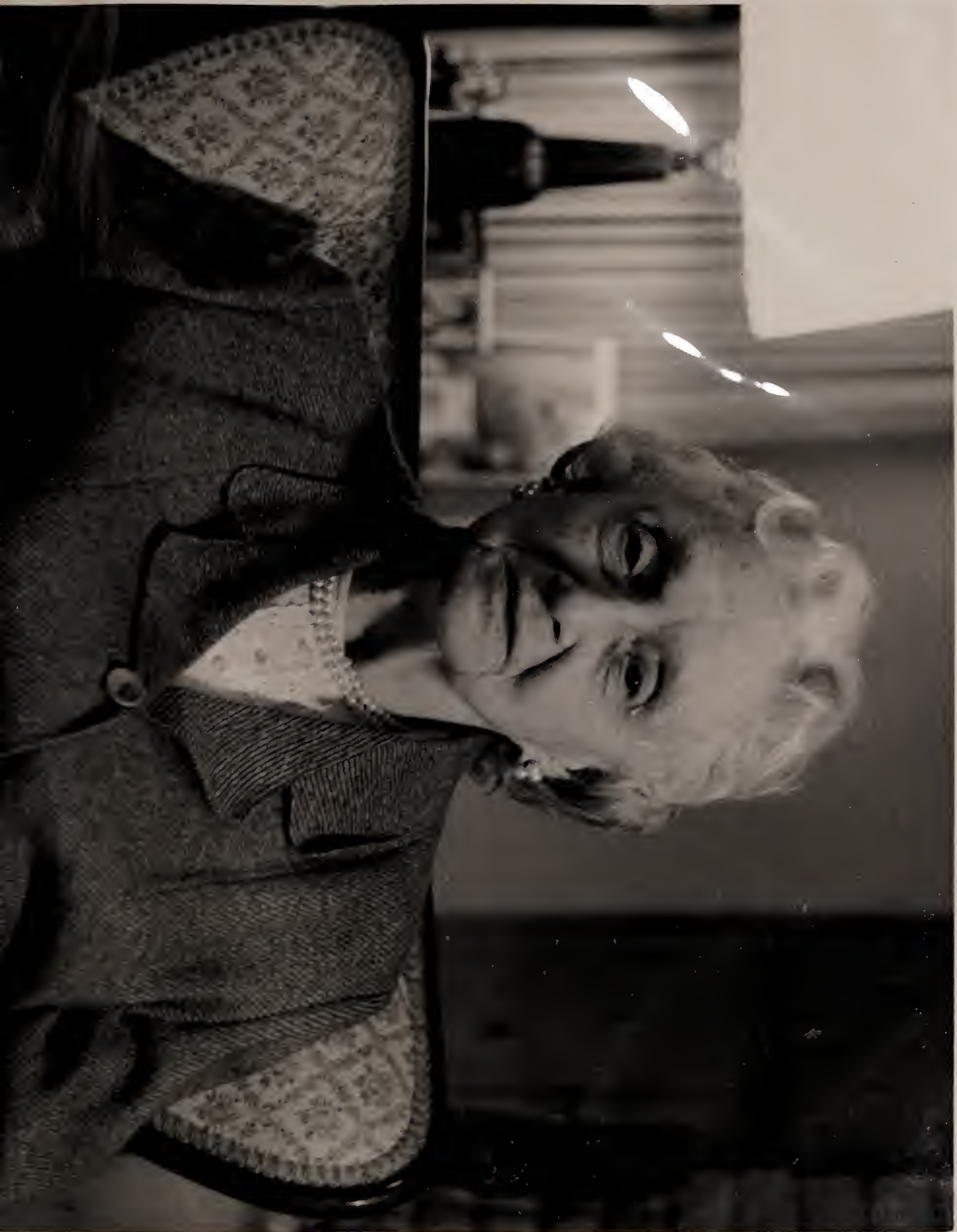
JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

MISS ELIZABETH BARNS

R
977.32
B267o

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room



R
977.32
B2670

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

This manuscript numbering 32[✓] pages is a transcript of one or more tape-recorded interviews with me. Any reader should bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of my spoken rather than my written word.

It is understood that the Joliet Junior College Learning Resource Center will allow others to read and utilize this manuscript and/or the tapes from time to time in connection with the educational purposes of the College and in accordance with the usual standards of the Learning Resource Center.

I hereby give and grant to Joliet Junior College as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the College shall determine the full use of this information.

Understood and agreed to

Interviewers

Michael Barr
(signature)

(signature)

(signature)

(date)

Interviewee

Elinor Ruth Barr
(signature)

333 East Ave.
(address)

Joliet, Ill. 60436
(city & state)

Feb - March, 1973
(date)

Richard Lee

12500 12500
12500 12500

12500 12500
12500 12500

This manuscript is hereby made available for research in accordance with the conditions set forth in the Interviewee Agreement. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publications, are reserved to Joliet Junior College. Persons wishing to quote any part of this manuscript must obtain written permission from the Director of the College Learning Resource Center.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Joliet Background.	5
High School and College.	6
First Teaching Job ("cadet teacher")	6
First Public Junior College.	7
Flu Epidemic of 1918	8
Depression (banks, schools, churches).	12
Aldermanic Government Changed.	14
Settlement Of Immigrants (Irish, German)	16
Social Life (recreation)	19, 24
First Black Family	19
Black Segregation In Band.	20
First Chemical Company	23
Liquor (beer).	24
Ethnic Groups.	25
"The Three Points"	26
Political Scandal.	27
"The 6th Ward"	28
Transportation	30
Closing.	32



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
Joliet Junior College Library

<https://archive.org/details/barneselizabeth00joli>

INTERVIEWEE: Miss Elizabeth Barns

INTERVIEWER: Michael Barr

BARR: This is an interview with Miss Elizabeth Barns, for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Project by Michael Barr at Miss Barn's home, 333 Earl Avenue, Joliet, Illinois, on February 4, 1973.

BARNs: I should like to start by making a general statement. At the turn of the century there was good leadership in Joliet. The population grew very fast in the 1890's and the first decade of the twentieth century. Immigrants were coming from southern Europe, not just from the British Isles and Sweden. Industrialization was well on its way in northern Illinois bringing with it need for change. Joliet became a steel city as well as "the stone city." Foresighted leaders brought about changes.

There had been talk of elevating the railroads for some time. All three of the roads going through the city ran on the surface. The Rock Island ran right across the Court House yard. But this was changed by elevating the tracks and building the Union Station. Streets that had been dirt roads got paved. South Chicago Street was paved to the city limits at Hickory Creek. Also, the period saw a dramatic building of schools, paid for as they were built. Several elementary schools were built in the 1890's so that by 1900 there were enough schools to house every elementary school-age child in the city. Besides, these new schools were financed by setting aside enough out of each year's taxes so that, when the taxes were collected, the year the school was finished, there was enough money to pay for it. No debts. The need for a good high school had been recognized to train in the skills needed by the

burgeoning industries. However, the Illinois State constitution limited the bonding power for building to five per cent of assessed value and that was not enough to build and equip the type of high schools needed. This problem was solved by a law authorizing "dual school districts." The law gave a community the right to set up a township high school district in addition to its elementary school district, thus making it possible to bond up to ten per cent of assessed value. Under that condition Joliet built its township high school, which opened the fall of 1901. Up to that time the only public high school in Joliet was housed on the upper floor of an elementary school building located on the corner of Chicago and Webster streets. There I had my first two years of high school, and I was graduated in 1902, one of the first classes to be graduated from Joliet Township. In my senior year I had taken two math courses and one history course of college grade. That fall I entered Northwestern University where, with those college credits, by carrying more than the regular number of hours each semester I got a Bachelor of Arts degree in three years instead of four. In September of 1905 I was taken onto the faculty at Joliet Township High School as what would today be called a "cadet teacher." Dr. Brown was aiming to make a math teacher of me. I had no classes to begin with but I observed other teachers.

BARR: So the job of a "cadet teacher" was just to observe?

BARNS: Well, also to be observed. Very soon I had to conduct classes with the regular teacher present in the room. After class she and I conferred on what had been done and how improvement could have been made. I also had the responsibility of giving help to individual students who needed it.

BARR: And which high school was this?

BARNS: This was Joliet Township High School. As I look at it now the most important thing that happened that year 1905 were items that proved Joliet Junior College to be the first public junior college in the country. As I said before, college grade work was being done either in what were regular high school classes or in "post-graduate" classes. The school had provided additional schooling for students who had finished high school. These students had, however, never been identified or separate from high school students. But in 1905, for the first time, the "post-graduates" were given a room of their own, and I was put in charge of it. I presume the reason was because I was young enough to identify with them; after all I was only three years older than most of them. They accepted me and I came to know that group very well, some became lifelone friends. As a result, years later when the question of which was the first public junior college in the country, my contributions to the research furnished some of the data that proved Joliet's to have been the first one. I was able to testify and prove, for example, that the postgrads had extra curricular activities. One of the English teachers, a Miss Baldwin, organized a dramatics club and the club put on "She Stoops to Conquer." They not only played it here in Joliet but they went to Morris and there was a write-up in the paper. The cast had its picture taken and I was able to get a copy of the news paper write-up and from Palma Gross (later Mrs. Lloyd Jones), who was a member of the cast, a copy of the photograph. Because I spent forty-two years teaching at Joliet Township and Joliet Junior College, many of my memories are of what happened there.

There were two other things that were not as pleasant. One of the things that came to my mind as something that was a very significant thing in the community was the flu epidemic of 1918. I think we called it the Spanish Flu but it was named the Asiatic Flu, also, I think. The schools were closed because of this. I had heard of it first through one of our teachers who lived in Waukegan and she came back from a visit home telling us about the terrible destruction that was happening at the Naval Training Station at Great Lakes. She said the boys there were dying so fast that they couldn't even get coffins for them. They just had to use boxes and they piled them up on top of each other. They couldn't send them out to their homes fast enough. Her brother was in the program and he knew something about that. Well presently it struck Joliet and especially the middle district. I don't know why that was but it may have been other industries too; any place where people gathered together a good deal. Dr. Shreffler was a very good friend of ours and we heard about it from him. One of my very good friends who was also of this class of 1905 had gone to the University of Chicago in 1920 but she had been there, that was second trip to the University. She had been there in earlier days and had just a brief training, something like a couple of years maybe, something like a junior college training in teaching kindergarten, or very young children. She had come back to Joliet and she had opened the first kindergarten in the public schools of Joliet in Park School. They got a good many mill children there and she and Katherine Corkrine went into the homes of every one of these children, many of them had only one, many of them didn't even know the English language, a good many of them were Mexican people. But she and Katherine were able to establish very good relationships with the mothers of these children and this woman that I am

speaking about is Olga Adams. She went in 1920 into the University to get her degree and she never came back to Joliet because the University kept her on and she became the director of the kindergarten at the University, and that is where she spent most of her life. But during this epidemic that I am telling you about she was down here, she was still in Joliet at that time and she was going home from school when the school was closed and she met Dr. Shreffler on the way and he said to her, "What are you doing these days?" And she said, "Well, school's closed and I was just going home, I'm doing nothing." And he said, "Well, go out to the country club. We are starting an emergency hospital out at the country club." They had to take care of the children who's parents were sick. So she said the next morning she got on the 7 o'clock street car going out to that area and there was only one other person on and it was a Negro woman who got into a conversation with her and they found they were both going to the same place. This woman had been trained and was a nurse, and she had been trained by a man who was at that time, I have forgotten his name now, he was considered the greatest pediatrician in the country. I don't know how they had gotten her to come to do this but at any rate she and Miss Adams worked there in the room that they established for the children. They didn't have too many children. Most of the children were not sick. But they were the children of the people who were afflicted and so they had to have somebody to take care of them. Her story was interesting. One of our high school teachers heard that she was out and said that she wanted to come, too, and she was extremely valuable to them. Her name was Ruth Crandal. And she was a language teacher and spoke Spanish very well. When these girls first went out, a Dr.'s wife, Mrs. Flexer was volunteering to do laundry as they had no facilities, of course, for laundry. And she was just washing sheets in the bath tubs, you know. And then it

was wintertime and terribly cold weather and hanging out the sheets was a job and in the first place Miss Adams and Ruth Crandal both helped them but they soon got a washing machine from somebody here in Joliet that was in the business, you know, furnished them with that kind of thing. But Mrs. Flexer stayed on as the head of the laundry. All the time, I guess, they had that thing out there. But, Ruth Crandal was there when the first children that they took care of were twins, Mexican twins, and Olga said that when she started they were dreadfully dirty, they hadn't been cared for for several days, the mother was sick. The father wasn't. He was about and terribly distressed about his wife and children. And Olga said that she started to bathe this child and she didn't know how they came there but that it had some chicken feather stuck on it. And she took a feather off and took some skin off so she sent for the nurse right away and the nurse came and said, "Don't bother about this baby, we can't save that baby." And the baby died and the father was so distressed and the doctor told him that they musn't tell the mother that the baby was dead. And so the question came of what to do about it. He had some place to bury the baby, there was some place provided to bury the baby but he was so distressed because there was no priest and the undertaker said that he knew something of the service and that he could perform the service and Ruth Crandal said she would say a prayer in Spanish and the man said that he did so want to have a picture of the baby for his wife. So they took this little baby, they got clothing, they got the baby all dressed up in pretty bright clothing and got a little coffin and a Mexican photographer took a picture of the baby, the father was holding this baby in his arms and then they went off to the cemetery. The father was so grateful that he couldn't do

enough to let me know how grateful he was for what they had done for him. And they remained friends of this family as long as they stayed in Joliet. Well, Miss Adams said that the children didn't seem to be affected by it as much as the older people. That was the only death they had in the children there. Of course, the children were away from the other people but the ballroom was filled with cots and men were on them and Olga said she was looking in from the veranda looking into the room one day with a nurse there beside her and this nurse said, "All those men will be dead by morning."

BARR: Do you have any idea of how many people were killed in Joliet by this?

BARNES: No, I don't know how many people were lost but I think if I were you I would get some of the newspapers of that time because it was really, very dreadful. But it was finally checked. But another story that Arthur Schreffler told, the doctors were just overworked terribly and he said he was starting for home about 9 o'clock one night and he called his office. Doctors made home calls in those days. And his office girl said, "Oh, you must go up onto Collins Street, there is a child who's mother was sent to the hospital before and the father was sent this afternoon and this child was a five year old boy and he was alone and he called the nurse because he was terribly lonesome. So, the doctor went up to the place and he said as he opened the door and went in there was a stove there in the room and the little boy was behind the stove asleep with his arms around his dog. And he said he always knew that a boy ought to have a dog but he never knew why so much as he did at that moment. I don't know what they did with the

little boy but they took care of him somehow or another. I didn't have anything to do, I didn't have anywhere to go because my brother and his wife were both sick, my brother had a grocery store, and his wife's sister and I ran the store for a few days (laugh) until they got somebody else to do it. Another very outstanding thing that I remember is the great depression. That came, it didn't hit as hard until about 1931. We had five banks in Joliet and three of them were down by 1931, I believe, or 1932 anyway. It hit the high school, the taxes for 1931 didn't come and so the Board had to be called, they thought they had gotten things all planned for the fall and when the taxes came in they said they thought they couldn't do the things that they had planned to do. And, the only bank that was left in Joliet eventually when the Bank Moratorium came after the election of 1932, there was a moratorium declared right away by the Federal Government. The high school teachers made an agreement with the board that they would, if the board felt that it was necessary, they would allow the board to skip pay day every now and then. (laugh) And that they would never put in any claim later for money that was lost that way. We were paid with warrants. We didn't get paid cash and the Boston Store pretty much came to the rescue, I don't know whether everybody did, but pretty much everybody that I talked with was buying everything that they got at that time at the Boston Store. They had a grocery store and they sold gas for cars and things like they. They were these teacher warrants, and I was told that the bank that had the mortgage on their property, they had expanded their property some, the bank warned them that they were doing something that was rather dangerous. But, I don't know where they got their money but they got money enough to cash those in,

these warrants, they took the warrants, anyway, and people bought their stuff there. We had more people in school than we ever had before. Eighteen year olds came and 17 and 18 year olds who had dropped out of school and many of them had gotten jobs, and came back to school. We had overly loaded classes and I had a room that had 136 seats and it was always over-loaded. I had over enrollment at the beginning of the semester, when I took role I had to line the people up that I didn't have seats for and have them count their number off to me, you know. Also, the teachers were distressed because children came to school without having anything to eat and they fainted in classes, you know. And the teachers organized play and they gave at least two performances that I remember vividly. I was not ever a part of it because I had no talent in that line at all, but the amount of cleverness in that faculty was the thing that not only surprized the faculty but surprized all of the community. (laugh) I will never forget Dorothy Hugets. She played Top-sy. They put on different stocks you know. But I will never forget Jimmy Skinner who was the math teacher and he did sleight-of-hand stuff. And he came down out of the sky on a wire somehow and he was all dressed like a ballet dancer and his knobby knees were showing. It was funny as he could be. They called him back and back and everybody was...

BARR: This was all during the Depression?

BARNS: Yes, this was in the Depression. This was some of the things we did to please people who came to school. The community, of course, organized, too. And one thing that I remember was Ed Corlott had built those buildings, those low buildings between, on Scott Street, Jefferson and Van Buren. And he volunteered to take one of those as a distributing place for the goods like cotton goods, for clothing and things of that kind. They just brought them in and the people were given these

materials but they had to make them up. And it got so that people were afraid that they weren't going to get anything and they almost had a riot there one time and I remember that Mame Barr, the wife of Dick Barr, who was our State Senator got up on the counter and reasoned with these people and told them that there was enough material there for everybody but they couldn't take care of them, they'd have to be patient and wait to be waited on. And she really got their cooperation. I wonder what would happen now? She really had that crowd in the palm of her hand before she got through with them. They might have torn her to pieces. But at any rate everybody realized that it was something that nobody was to blame for and that nobody could help.

BARR: Can you remember anything the Depression may have had to do with the political scene in Joliet?

BARNS: Well, I can't remember who was our Mayor at the time. Everything that could possibly be done by the Government was done, I am sure. And the churches did such a lot, the church people did such a lot. I know intimately a group of young married women who are organized in the First Presbyterian Church and those people just really organized themselves. They took their sewing machines and they made a line, they just got so that they were operating like a regular factory. And they wouldn't allow, they were very particular, they insisted that the children should have good looking clothes, they wanted their clothes to look nice and be pretty and the children loved them. Well, so much for that.

BARR: You mentioned something about how it used to be an aldermanic form of government and it was changed to a commission form.

BARNS: Yes. That was another thing that happened. I think that happened about 1915. I'm not too sure about when that happened. It may have been a little later. We had an aldermanic form and it was working badly and some of the aldermen, there were seven wards in the city. There was a school in every one of these wards. It was a very bitter campaign I remember; but at the end of it the groups that lost were very cooperative. The leaders that had been there before said that they would work and they did work with the others. The reason that they finally gave it up for the City Manager form of government was that each commissioner was put at the head of each one of the departments. I believe that there were five departments. And each of them worked for himself. But there was no coordination for the city as a whole, and the planning wasn't done on the city-wide basis. That was the thing that made them give that up presently. On what I have said, are there any questions you would like to ask?

BARR: Yes. I wonder if you could comment on the dissatisfaction around Joliet around 1914. Why and which forces and where at. You mentioned that earlier about 1914.

BARNS: I haven't really, can you leave that and let me think about it more. I can't answer the question. I know that they thought there was an awful lot of grafting and incompetence on the part of some of the aldermen.

BARR: Yes, this is still during the aldermanic form.

BARNS: Yes, but I can't give you detail about that.

BARR: And how about the settlement. Where did the different people settle in Joliet. About the Irish and German people.

BARNS: You can often tell if you go into any city in this country, anyway, you can often tell how the city developed by the names of streets and things of that kind. The first main street was Bluff Street. That when the railroad came through the east side began to develop. What we call downtown began to develop more. That area had been the area between Bluff Street and Eastern Avenue. Eastern Avenue is the same level as Bluff Street and the Silver Cross Hill is the same level as Nicholson Street and that area up there. The slope is very steep and close together on the west side but very much wider on the east side, very much wider than on the west side. And the area in between Bluff Street and Eastern Avenue was awful boggy. And before it got drained it was not very good as a place to build on. But the first place on the east side that built up was, you can almost tell by the names of some of the streets there. Almost every town had streets named for Presidents or for men who were leaders in the nation and you get Jefferson and Van Buren, Van Buren was a democrat. Joliet was democratic pretty much in early days. And then Clinton was one of the leaders in Congress but he didn't make presidency ever. And then as you go farther you get Webster and Clay and Jackson. Those go to the east. Those were developed long in the 1830's and along in there. Then when you get to the 60's and you come over to the south-east part of the city developing and you get Lincoln Street and Grant Avenue and Union; all those names are connected with Civil War times. That gives the way in which the city developed. The west side didn't develop as residential beyond Raynor

Avenue until oh, as late as 1910, along in there. There was hardly anything beyond Raynor Avenue on the west side. And the big development of the west side came when they built a big sewer there on, that was the 50's and 60's, the west side developed. It developed in the 40's too. No developments were made in the 1930's when the depression was on. And it took a while for us to crawl out of the depression. It took a good many years to crawl out of the depression. Then the 50's and 60's were the time when the west side developed so very fast.

BARR: There was a great deal of stone quarrying done?

BARNS: There was a great deal of stone quarrying in the early days and the quarries around the city after the canal was built, the Illinois and Michigan Canal was finished, I believe, in 1848. A lot of building in Chicago was done with Joliet limestone and there was a good many people all the way up to Lemont and all the way up along there. Those, the chief businesses of the businessmen of those areas and all the way down to Joliet, their chief business was stone business.

BARR: And what did the Irish do mostly in Joliet?

BARNS: The Irish built the canal, the Irish immigrants and they built the railroads, too. We had some great railroad builders here in Joliet. My school district over here in Reedswood School District. Sam B. Reed was the chief engineer of construction on the Union Pacific railroad when it was built. He wrote letters to his family during the period of time that he was building that railroad. And one thing you must get is the copy of, you must read a copy of his letters to his family. A copy of it is over here, I think, in the school. But I am

sure the library has a copy. The original of the letter is in California, I understand his grandson has it but Fred Bennett here is a grandson also and Fred Bennett, I know has copies of that made and I think there is one in the public library and one over here in the school. And another great railroad builder from Joliet was a man who worked with him, Sir William Van Horn, and became very famous because he took the Canadian Pacific across the mountains. He's buried out here in Oakwood Cemetery. Queen Victoria knighted him for the building of the road and there is a book that has just been written about him, I heard it advertised over the "Today Show."

BARR: Do you remember a man named Julian Barns who was an architect?

BARNES: Yes, he was my first cousin.

BARR: .Your first cousin?

BARNES: Yes. He was much older than I. His children were more nearly my age.

BARR: He was a great architect.

BARNES: Yes, he was a very fine architect. He built the Universalist block and he built the Richards Street Methodist Church. His home was a Joliet limestone house just about a block south of the church. There is a building down in Dwight also that belongs to the Outen family. It is another building he built which is out on Manhattan Road. It was the old Buehler home. Mr. Buehler was a dairyman and the house is still there and in good condition.

BARR: What can you remember about the social life of Joliet around the time when you were, say when you were in your 20's to 40's.

BARNS: I didn't associate with the top-flight socialites in Joliet.

BARR: What did people do for recreation?

BARNS: Oh, they had dances. A traditional banquet was the Forefather's Supper that the First Presbyterian people planned and everybody went. They always had a very good speaker to come in from outside. The women of the Church took their best linen, silver and dishes. It was really a very dress-up occasion, a very, very nice occasion. It celebrated the founding of Plymouth.

BARR: What do you remember about segregation back in the old days when they first started a high school. Did blacks have any problem say like about getting into the band...

BARNS: There were no black.

BARR: No blacks?

BARNS: The very earliest I remember very well, I think I am right in saying that the first black was a cab driver, his name was Dishman. He lived in the Three Points, that was the only black family in Joliet for a long time I am sure.

BARR: What date would that be around, can you remember?

BARNS: Well, that was before I was in high school but it lasted, I was a very little girl but Mr. Bush who was a prominent businessman, had a mission; he was a Baptist and he established a Baptist mission down at

the Three Points. On the ground floor of that building this black family lived because Mr. Bush was the kind of a person who believed in all God's people being one. Then by the time I was teaching high school, we had not too many blacks in, but Katherine Dunham, and her brother, Albert Dunham were graduates of our school. Albert Dunham was a good musician but he couldn't get into the band and the reason why Mr. McCalister, who was the director of the band, said the reason why was because when they went to other places they couldn't get anyplace, they couldn't get into a hotel and so they wouldn't let him into the band.

BARR: They wouldn't even let him play in the band even in Joliet?

BARNS: Well, he wouldn't play there. I mean he wouldn't do it after he wasn't accepted as a regular member. He was upset about that. They did establish an orchestra, however, and he was in this orchestra, he always played in the orchestra. But the orchestra never had the reputation that the band had. I must get this clear because I am not quite sure. I had a letter from Evan Bailey Bocket which I will get out for you. And I gather from him that the first national band contest was in Joliet, Illinois. And my understanding of what he said was that he said that Mr. McCalister had built up the band and Mr. Bocket tells this story much better than I am able to tell it so I am going to give you a copy of what he said.

BARR: About this Dunham who was the musician that they couldn't let in the band because they couldn't travel, do you remember a date of what that could possibly be?

BARNS: Well, anytime between, let's see, the band was established by McCalister as early as 1911, 1910 or 11, somewhere in there, all it was was a group of boys sitting on nail kegs over in the wood working shop which was across the road from the school. Archie McCalister was really a genius and that was the one thing he wanted to do was have a band. He lived for it and he did a very find job with it. But a friend tells the story about how when Dr. Smith was here and Dr. Smith came about 1919, I would say, somewhere in there, Dr. Brown left and Dr. Smith came and Dr. Smith was interested in vocational education and he established a vocation program where boys were put into groups that had six weeks of woodwork maybe and six weeks in electric shop and so forth, and that left him to persuade Dr. Smith to let him have these boys in the same way. I believe it was only at noon that they could have them that way but I can't quite remember that.

BARR: What were the teacher's salaries back then?

BARNS: Oh, teacher's salaries were poor but they were competitive with schools like New Trier and for a long time salaries were competitively bad, Oak Park, never with Chicago. Chicago always had higher salaries than anybody else in the state. Money was worth more than it is today. Inflation has dropped its money value and our salaries, women didn't get paid as much as men did. At least for half of the time I have taught my salary was different, was less, than that of men doing the same work. I think that the thing that was supposed to justify that was that men were supporting families and the idea was that women who worked were just working for pen money, you know. As a matter of fact, many of us were supporting as many people as many of the men on the faculty. We

were carrying not only our own support but we were carrying the support of other people. I remember talking with Dr. Smith about that and what Dr. Smith said was, "I don't justify this Miss Barns. I don't justify it at all. But the fact of the matter is that we can buy the services of the women cheaper than we can buy the services of an equally good man teacher. And I never knew a school board yet," he said, "who would pay more than they had to for a teacher." But it was also in his time that we got that changed.

BARR: Was Dr. Smith the school board president?

BARNS: No, he was the superintendent after Dr. Brown.

BARR: Now, do you remember anything about the city administration, the different administrations throughout the years?

BARNS: I haven't thought about it at all. I might have something to say. Richard Barr was our Mayor there in the early days. I think he was there at the time, this was before the time when he went to Springfield. I think that he was more responsible than anybody else for getting the railroad elevated. Anyway, I think it came in his time. He was mayor more than once, I think. I don't remember about that. I don't remember too much about that.

BARR: Do you remember a man by the name of Sebastian Lager.

BARNS: Yes.

BARR: He was mayor.

BARNS: Yes.

BARR: Was he known as a pretty fair mayor or...

BARNES: I think so. He was the man who financed Mr. Block who established the Block Company, the first chemical company. Mr. Block came to Joliet in 1908, how do I remember that. I don't know how I remember that but I know it is true. And he had, I believe he had \$1,200.00 of capital but he was a Russian Jew and had had training in Russian and German and Swiss Universities and his brother came here to Joliet and he tried, he went around to all the banks and tried to get somebody to finance him and nobody was willing to do it. They didn't know him, you know, and he was a foreigner. And finally Mr. Lager financed him. He started a little factory down on, I think it is called Independence Street, or something like that down in the valley north and east of Theodore Street. Up around in here, around in that area. And then he foresaw, he knew his Europe and he foresaw the coming of the First World War. And he knew that we had no chemical industries in the United States at that time. I don't know whether I ought to say none but at any rate we depended upon Germany for our chemicals. And he knew that if a war came that the Americans could never get their chemicals because the British fleet would stop them from coming across the sea. That is one way they would try to beat the Germans, by starving them out of their markets. So he started that plant in 1908 and he made long-term contracts for materials like sulphur and I have forgotten whatever makes the base for baking power and he sold out to, I think he sold out to a baking powder company at the end of the First World War for I believe it was \$950,000.00, almost a million dollars. And that happened in just ten years.

BARR: Now, where in Joliet were the central areas for recreation, where people would go, on the weekends. Maybe the downtown area?

BARNS: Yes, we had motion pictures you know. When did I see the first motion picture? I saw the first motion picture at, we used to have a County Fair. Everybody would go to the County Fair. And the first motion picture I saw was at the County Fair. But it was a very clumsy thing and the "Crystal Stairs" was the name of the theater down on Chicago Street. And I can't remember whether it was upstairs over, it could have been in a block between, I think it was in the block between VanBuren and Clinton on the west side of the street there. And that was our big theater at the time. A legitimate theater was much more entertainment than anything else was in they way of plays, you know. And we had an "opera house" here in Joliet, so called, that was on Clinton Street. And we didn't have many shows but shows did come to Joliet.

BARR: Do you remember when the opera house burned?

BARNS: Yes, I saw the burning but I can't remember the date.

BARR: Do you know what caused the fire?

BARNS: No, I don't know what caused the fire. But it went like wild-fire, you know, because of the things that were stored there.

BARR: Were Joliet people pretty much beer-drinking people?

BARNS: There was Porter's Brewery and there was Sehring's Brewery and there may have been others. I belonged to a family that was a tea totaling family and so I didn't know much of anything about liquor. But, I know that when prohibition came Mr. Sehring was the kind of person, by the way, Mr. Sehring was a mayor on occasion. Mr. Sehring said that when

had to do business with outlaws he was going out of business. He went out of business rather than to try and do business and deal with them. But you see the water supply at Joliet, fresh water supply of Joliet was from the artisian wells, they were supposed to be wonderful water to make beer with. But that was the main thing, having a good supply of water. And the only running well that I know now is out in Pilcher Park. But that stream of water came all the way down through the city. Oh, when you were asking what we did for entertainment, we had picnics and outdoor things a lot, and the boys in winter time used the hills of Joliet for tobogganning, and they did that when I was in high school. Then there were gangs of boys that fought each other on the hills. The 6th Ward was on South Chicago Street and between there and the river and I think that as far as the railroad track probably went, beyond that, I don't just remember what the boundary was but the 7th Ward was over beyond that. But 6th Ward was, well it was called the "Bloody 6th" sometimes. There were a lot of imigrant Irish people that lived down there. It was mostly Irish people in early day. They were succeeded by Italian people. In about 1900, I think 1907, was the year that we had more immigrants than any other year in our history. The reason was that we had no restrictions on immigration until about that time then we felt that we were bringing people and I am sure that we were faster than we could assimilate them. And they were mussing up our economy and mussing up our government, too. Because people that were politically minded catered to the immigrant groups, like the Polish groups and the Irish groups and the Germans, etc. German people, you asked about German immigration, German people settled mostly on the west side and north of Jefferson Street. Hickory Street, a lot of them lived around there and the St.

John Church was always a German Church. It was a German speaking Church. And St. Peters Lutheran Church was a German speaking church too. St. Peters had a German service there as late as the 1920's or later than that. It was later than the 1920's. The German people were very good, we thought of them as very desirable immigrants. The Irish less so because some of the Irish became the leaders of the community but they were very quarrelsome. They didn't fight other people but they fought each other mostly, I think. But Saturday night they got drunk and they got pretty noisy and...

BARR: Did they ever do this downtown, by the taverns?

BARNS: No, the taverns were all over town and at one time I remember I think there was five taverns within three blocks. And this makes me think; I lived on the corner of Duncan and Chicago Street and our neighborhood was a very nice neighborhood. It was a very respectable neighborhood. But here were the Three Points for all those saloons. We didn't call them taverns in those days. We called them saloons. And they stayed open until 11 o'clock and they usually emptied at 11 o'clock but some of them didn't, I guess, some of them were bad. But anyway, I was never afraid to be out at any time of the day or the night. If I would walk over visiting somebody on Richards Street, for instance, I had no feeling about going through the Three Points and going back home, you know. I never was the least bit afraid.

BARR: You mentioned the Three Points. What were the Three Points.

BARNS: The Three Points were as follows: here was South Chicago Street and here was Eastern Avenue coming into South Chicago Street and here

was Fifth Avenue. And this is the Three Points. Some of the saloons were on both sides. One of them was over here, there was a saloon up one block from here and McDonough Street is down here, there was one on the corner of McDonough and Chicago Streets and the man who ran that one lived here on Ottawa Street, and McDonough, and he was our alderman part of the time. And I have heard of this somewhere, I can't remember now, but at any rate we had a lot of them. But I don't know. My brother said that when he was out at night he would never walk down the sidewalks. He walked in the road. And I don't know what he thought. He was afraid of being attacked by a drunken man. I don't know what a drunken man would do, he really didn't have much money with him ever. But at any rate, he said a drunken man could run fast and if he didn't have to dodge anything he could run a straight line but if he got him off the line then it was bad. He couldn't do things. But anyway I remember his saying that he walked in the middle of the street.

BARR: Do you remember any particular scandal in the government throughout the years. Anyone that stands out in your mind that people were up in arms about it?

BARNES: I can't think of any now. I can remember when I was up in arms about, well rather recently, but McCarthy who was a supervisor was a very dishonest man. But I am trying to think of any. I never knew the ends and outs of some of these things but I do remember, and I can't remember the name. It was a nickname that one of these men had that was considered a very dishonest man and a very stupid man and a very inefficient kind of a person. He was the alderman from the 6th Ward.

BARR: Now this ward was the pretty disgraceful ward?

BARNS: Yes, the 6th Ward was a bad one and the 1st ward, that was the mill district. The mill district was the first ward I think. And that was bad too. Whiskey Row they called that, the Bloody 6th, we were the Bloody 6th and the other was Whiskey Row.

BARR: Do you remember when the library was built?

BARNS: Yes, it was built while I was in college so that was somewhere between 1902 and 1905.

BARR: And you went to Eliza Kelly for grade school. And was that known as being a pretty progressive school?

BARNS: Oh, it was a good school. We had Irish teachers, but you musn't get the idea that all Irish were bad. We had Irish teachers who were good teachers. They liked their children and they would stand no non-sense you know, and after Eliza Kelley left that school, Nellie McNiff became principal. And I had most of my training under Nellie McNiff. But I had Charlette Rogan as a teacher and she was an excellent teacher.

BARR: Do you remember Mrs. O'Leary?

BARNS: No, I don't know Mrs. O'Leary. Age with me brings inability to remember proper names.

BARR: Maybe you can comment on teaching methods and how they have changed or comparing math to history, history to math.

BARNS: Well, I have told you that I always did not like history when I

was in school, in grade school and in high school, because it was taught as a memory subject and when I got into college for the first time I had a teacher who taught it as it ought to be taught. As a problem saving thing. Because the learning in history, and in math, is an understanding. You don't know math unless you understand it. And the same thing was true for history. Unless you understand the problems that were facing people and the way that they make their decisions and the pulling and hauling that occurs because people have different ideas about something that should be done, you know. The learning in history is the understanding about that kind of thing. And it is an understanding really of human problems, you see, and the way they are handled and the way they have been handled in the past by people. And as soon as I got that vision of history, I have loved history ever since. And I can't quit now. What I have got to read over there is, that top book is "The Seagull." Have you read it?

BARR: No.

BARNS: Well, it has been a best seller, I understand for several years. And take a look at the photography in it. But, the rest of those books, there are none of them with pictures or anything of that sort. Aren't they pictured lovely?

BARR: Yes they are, Seagulls are so nice.

BARNS: Well, "The Seagull" is a comparison between the seagull and the individuals really. And you can read it in an hour or so and it is worth reading.

BARR: How would you be able to get from Joliet to Chicago?

BARNS: Mostly by train. There were streetcars that ran between Chicago and Joliet but mostly we had very good, comparative to what we have now, we had very good commuter trains to Chicago. And we had a \$1.00 round trip as I remember for weekends. (laugh) Something like that, it was very cheap and we went in very, very often and went into Chicago for theaters. For years a group of people that I played around with had season tickets for the theater guild plays.

BARR: Where there any roads that went up to Chicago?

BARNS: Oh, yes. But good through roads are a matter that didn't happen until...The roads between here and Manhattan or to Plainfield or over to New Lenox were township roads. The roads between the farm places around and these little villages were really just little villages. And as late as the 1920's, it was as late as the 1920's before we got a country road between Joliet and Manhattan. We had relatives in Manhattan. And you went out to, I believe it was Love's Corner, a family named Love lived out there and I think it was their corner. It may have been the next corner that where Joliet Township ended and Manhattan Township began. And Joliet roads were better than Manhattan Roads. But as long as people got around with a horse and buggy, people didn't fuss too much about roads. But when automobiles came in, as soon as automobiles came in, then people began to insist upon having not only country roads, county roads came in more and then state roads and presently, of course, the federal roads. We go crazy on federal roads now, I think. But Werden Buck was my cousin and he sold building materials and road building materials and things like that and he also had around the kind of automo-

biles that give prestige to people now-a-days were given in those days by the kind of a team you drove, you know, and the kind of a harness that you had. If you had silver harnesses and things like that. And Werden Buck always had a spanking team. It took him a long time to give his team up and buy an automobile but when he did he took a leadership in the building of roads. And that was true of a lot of men who had been great lovers of horses and breeders of horses some of them, John Baker, was a cousin of my mother down in Manhattan. Do you know where the round barn is out there on the Manhattan Road?

BARR: Yes.

BARNS: Well, that is the old Baker farm. He raised horses and he also raised cattle. He had a big farm, he had two sections of land out there.

BARR: There is an inscription in a book that reads, "Joliet as sometimes styled Stone City. It is situated on both sides of the DesPlaines River and a beautiful valley with its suburbs extended back on the bluffs like the wings of a great army. If Joliet is not a city on a hill, it is certainly founded on a rock. It is well laid out, the streets broad, with excellent sidewalks and boarded with handsome trees." And I wondered if you might have any kind of a description like that.

BARNS: No, I remember all of that. One of the great sadnesses to me is the way the trees have already gone and more of them are going. Look what happened in this yard in July when that big storm came. It just made me sick. We had two trees uprooted and then two other trees had the whole top and middle of them broken off. But the loss of the trees on Western Avenue and Buell Avenue and Raynor Avenue, that is just pathetic to me, tragic. It is equally true on the east side. East Cass Street

used to be a shaded, beautifully shaded place. Now it is just barren most of the way out there. This area was heavily wooded. The woods there, Lincoln came to Joliet one time and I have forgotten now the name of the woods. It was just where Center Street, well the hill there above Center Street and Buell Avenue, was the place where he spoke. This was long before my day, I don't remember that. But I remember hearing and reading about it.

BARR: Well, that's all that I have, is there anything you would like to add on?

BARNS: Well, I think, I'll do some thinking and I will hunt up that letter of May Brockett's and my filing habits are shocking and I don't know what I do with things sometimes. I have a hard time finding them. But, I will try to do that.

BARR: I would like to thank you very much for cooperating with us.

BARNS: Well, you are very welcome and I'm afraid that I have done a very bad job.

BARR: Oh, you've done a very good job. It was very good.

INDEX

- Adams, Olga, 9, 10, 11
aldermanic, 14, 15
Americans, 23
artisian, 25
Astiatic Flu, 8
- Bachelor of Arts degree, 6
Baker, Mr., 31
Baldwin, Miss, 7
Bank Moratorium, 12
Baptist, 19
Barns, Julian, 18
Barr, Dick, 14
Barr, Mame, 14
Bennett, Fred, 18
Block, Mr., 23
Block Company, 23
Bloody 6th, 25, 28
Bluff Street, 16
Board, 12
Boston Store, 12
British fleet, 23
Brockett, Evan Bailey, 20
Brockett, May, 32
Brown, Dr., 21, 22
Buehler, Mr., 18
Bush, Mr., 19
- cadet teacher, 6
California, 18
Canadian Pacific, 18
Center Street, 32
Chicago, 17, 21, 30
Chicago Street, 6, 24, 26, 27
Church, 19
City Manager, 15
Civil War, 16
Clay, 16
Clinton Street, 16, 24
Collins Street, 11
Congress, 16
Corkrine, Katherine, 8
Corlott, Ed, 13
County Fair, 24
Crandal, Ruth, 9, 10
Crystal Stairs, 24
- Depression, 13, 14, 17
Desplaines River, 31
Dishman, Mr., 19
- Duel School Districts, 6
Duncan, 26
Dunham, Albert, 20
Dunham, Katherine, 20
Dwight, 18
- East Cass Street, 31
Eastern Avenue, 16, 26
Election of 1932, 12
emergency hospital, 9
English, 8
Europe, 23
- Federal Government, 12
Fifth Avenue, 27
First Presbyterian, 19
First Presbyterian Church, 14, 19
First World War, 23
Flexer, Mrs., 9
Flu Epidemic, 8
Forefather's Supper, 19
- German, 16, 23, 25, 26
Germany, 23
Government, 14, 15
Grant Avenue, 16
Gross, Palma, 7
- Hickory Creek, 5
Hickory Street, 25
Horn, Sir William Van, 18
Hugets, Dorothy, 13
- Illinois and Michigan Canal, 17
Illinois State Constitution, 6
Independance Street, 23
Industrialization, 5
Inflation, 21
Irish, 16, 17, 25, 26, 28
Italian, 25
- Jackson, 16
Jefferson Street, 13, 16, 25
Joliet Junior College, 7
Joliet limestone, 17, 18
Joliet Township, 6, 7
Jones, Mrs. Lloyd, 7
July, 31
- Kelly, Eliza, 28

Lager, Sebastian, 22, 23
Lemont, 17
library, 18
Lincoln, 32
Lincoln Street, 16
Love's Corner, 30

Manhattan, 30
Manhattan Road, 18, 31
Mayor, 14, 22, 23, 24
McCallistor, Archie, 20, 21
McCarthy, Mr., 27
McDonough, 27
McNiff, Nellie, 28
Mexican, 8, 10
Morris, 7

Naval Training Station, 8
Negro, 9
New Lenox, 30
New Trier, 21
Nicholas Street, 16
Northern Illinois, 5
Northwestern University, 6

Oak Park, 21
Oakwood Cemetery, 18
opera house, 24
Ottawa Street, 27
Outen family, 18

Park School, 8
Pilcher Pard, 25
Plainfield, 30
Polish, 25
Porters Brewery, 24
post-graduates, 7
Presidents, 16

Raynor Avenue, 16, 17, 31
Reed, Sam B., 17
Reedwood School District, 17
Richard Street, 26
Richard Street Methodist Church, 18
Rock Island, 5
Rogan, Charlotte, 28
Russian, 23
Russian Jew, 23

Saint John's Church, 26
Saint Peter's Church, 26
Saturday night, 26
Scott Street, 13
Sehring's Brewery, 24
Sehring, Mr., 24
Seventh Ward, 25

She Stoops to Conquer, 7
Shreffler, Dr., 8, 9, 11
Silver Cross Hill, 16
6th Ward, 25, 27, 28
Skinner, Jimmy, 13
Smith, Dr., 21, 22
South Chicago Street, 15, 25, 26
Spanish, 9, 10
Spanish flu, 8
Springfield, 22
State Senator, 14
Swiss, 23

Theodore Street, 23
The Segull, 29
The Stone City, 5, 31
Three Points, 19, 20, 26, 27
Today Show, 18
Topsy, 13

Union, 16
Union Pacific, 17
Union Station, 5
United States, 23
Universalist block, 18
University, 9
University of Chicago, 8

Van Buren, 13, 16, 24
Victoria, Queen, 18

Waukegan, 8
Webster Street, 6
Western Avenue, 31
Wiskey Row, 28

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE LIBRARY
JOLIET, ILLINOIS

